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FM AMEMBASSY DHAKA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1522  
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 9324  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 1269  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO 7559  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 8677  
RUEHBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 7830  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 0602  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 005796

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/11/2016

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SUBJECT: GOB PROVIDES NAMES FOR S&T COMMITTEE

Classified By: A/DCM DMcCullough; reason 1.4(b and d)

11. (C) Summary. After three years of foot-dragging, the GOB has provided names for an advisory committee to activate the 2003 Bangladesh-U.S. Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation. The GOB names reflect a strong nuclear bias and Science Minister Khan's determination to pursue nuclear energy for power-strapped Bangladesh. While the GOB names come with only six weeks left in this BNP administration, and they lack the breadth we seek for a productive committee, we intend to move forward to try to institutionalize the Agreement and lay the ground work for a more meaningful S&T partnership with a new administration and a new Science Minister in January 2007. End summary.

12. (SBU) On September 10, post received a Diplomatic Note with the GOB's nominees for the advisory committee to meet and activate formally our bilateral 2003 Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation. The GOB representatives are: the Secretary of the Ministry of Science and Technology, a Joint Secretary (Administration) from the Ministry as "Member Secretary," the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) Chairman and two other BAEC officials, and one person from MFA.

13. (C) During his introductory meeting with the Ambassador on July 23, the Minister for Science and Information and Communications Technology, Dr. Abdul Moyeen Khan, made a strong pitch for U.S. assistance for providing a nuclear power plant to Bangladesh. He also pleaded for increased cooperation and exchanges among scientists, and for USG "support" for control panel upgrades for Bangladesh's 20-year-old nuclear research reactor.

14. (C) Ambassador stressed the need for a comprehensive approach on issues of scientific collaboration, rather than just recurring requests for nuclear reactors. ESToff subsequently met with the Minister's designated point of contact, Shafiqur Islam Bhuiyan, to discuss the next steps for the formation of an advisory committee to activate the bilateral S&T Agreement. Bhuiyan is a BAEC nuclear scientist who studied at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

15. (U) The Ministry of Science and Information & Communication Technology asked the Embassy on August 17 for its three representatives on "the Joint Science and Technology Advisory Committee". The Embassy nominated the A/DCM, ESToff, and a USAID representative.

16. (C) On September 11, A/DCM spoke with Minister Khan to express disappointment with the narrow nuclear focus of the

GOB approach to activating the bilateral S&T Agreement. He noted information technology and other areas of interest that deserved special attention. Khan pushed back that nuclear power is a GOB priority, and that the advisory committee could form subcommittees to deal with other issues.

17. (C) Comment: Khan is unlikely to run for re-election in the January 2007 election, and even if he wins and BNP returns to power, he almost certainly will not remain as Science Minister. Since we believe the GOB's narrow nuclear power focus would leave with Khan, and it is worthwhile to launch the Agreement after years of delay, we intend to move forward on inaugurating the committee, where we will restate our vision for the Agreement, listen, and prepare to follow-up with the new government in early 2007.  
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